

Adam W. JELONEK

Department of the Middle East and Far East

THE POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF EAST ASIA

The overthrowing of Salazar's dictatorship in Portugal in 1974 as a result of the 'Carnation Revolution' brought about, it is widely accepted, the third worldwide wave of democratization. Beginning in southern Europe, the 'third wave' rapidly spread, engulfing Latin America and Asia and in the 1990s it reached the countries of Eastern Europe and a part of Africa.¹ Numerous countries, that until then had authoritarian systems of government, swiftly filled in the ideological vacuum that had been created with liberal-democratic values. In this way, they rejected, at least formally, other non-democratic alternatives to the legitimization of their rule. Some supporters of liberal democracy began even to assume optimistically that democracy is the only form of government that is possible in modern societies.² It was then that Francis Fukuyama stated in a prophetic way that the history of mankind had ended together with the era of bipolar ideology. The triumphant Western model of liberal democracy was to become not only the dominant formula in the sphere of political organization, but also, according to Fukuyama, it became almost impossible to imagine any alternatives to it in the future.³

Leaving aside the ongoing discourse about the weakening dynamics of the processes of democratization in the contemporary world, it is necessary to state that even at their global peak the processes of the 'third wave' did not become a model for describing fundamental trends happening in the political systems of East Asia. A considerable number of non-democratic Asian countries put out a challenge to 'Western' visions of politics by prioritising economic growth, while in the public sphere there existed a strong nationalistic factor. Hence, the thesis about the unique nature of so-

¹ S.P. Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1991, p. 15.

² M.F. Plattner, 'The Democratic Moment' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1993, p. 30.

³ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*, Free Press, New York 1992, p. 45.

called Asiatic values – these were viewed as a potential alternative to the liberal values of Western societies – became very popular in the middle of the 1990s. East Asia's political leaders argued on many occasions that following the road of the Western development model is perfectly possible, but an alternative Asian model of political and economic development also existed.⁴ After adding to these views the famous hypothesis of Samuel P. Huntington who stated that post-cold war conflicts would originate from cultural differences and that they would replace the old ideological and economic divisions, one might suspect that the debate about the model of political transformation would dominate contacts between the West and East Asian civilizations. One might also expect that this debate would have an indirect influence on the peace and order of the future international community.

Can so-called Asian values threaten the progress of global democratization? The opinions on this subject were and are divided. Some Asian scholars, like Amartya Sen, maintain that democracy is a cosmopolitan value.⁵ According to them, it is rather improper that the leading figures of the Asian political scene hold an illusion about the incongruity of the Far East development model with the values of liberal democracy. In reality, says Sen, some politicians question the advisability of democratization because they attempt to counter the growing pressure to reform the system of government in their own countries. Some of them try to equate their authoritarian regimes with Western systems of government by often adding to the concept of democracy numerous 'adjectives.' The essence of the democratic system becomes permanently deformed in these terms: 'Confucian democracy,' 'steered democracy' or 'Asiatic democracy.' In many East Asiatic countries, in particular, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand, rapid economic growth led to the rather swift transformation of the functioning social model. Investment growth, better living conditions, stronger social dynamics or higher educational standards can thus be traced to the initial successes of democratic transformation. And though East Asia is a long way from having the permanent consolidation of its democratic systems, these processes can nonetheless determine which direction its political systems are steadily headed.⁶

This optimistic view is not shared by everybody. Obviously, some elements of cultural tradition do not prevent some Asiatic countries from progressing towards democratic processes. However, as has been pointed out by L. H. M. Lin and Chih-yu Shih, 'Confucianism with a liberal face' is a better term to characterize the nature of the East Asian democracy. According to these scholars, the processes of democratization, even if they make some progress, are in open conflict with traditional value systems. Thus, the end result of the political transformation in the countries of the region still remains unknown; and it is difficult to determine how much it will be in-

⁴ A. Dupont, 'Is There an "Asian Way"', *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1996), pp. 13-33.

⁵ A. Sen, 'Democracy as a Universal Value', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1999), p. 15.

⁶ G. O'Donnell, 'Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes' in S. Mainwaring, G. O'Donnell, J.S. Valenzuela (eds.), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1992, p. 18.

fluenced by, to a certain extent, the native Confucian tradition and how much by the European set of liberal values.⁷ The attempts to define the future fate of democracy in Asia are less precise because of an additional difficulty. Donald K. Emmerson has described the methodological problems in determining a set of the system of values typical for the countries of the region. The cultural diversity of Asia makes it impossible to gather all Asian countries into one logical group and to give them a common, collective identity.⁸

Although one cannot fully foresee the future of the democratization processes in Asia, one can pose a slightly less ambitious question, when considering the influence of traditional value systems on the dynamics of the processes of the political transformation in the region. It would be worthwhile to consider to what extent modernization and democratization force the transformation of traditional value systems, and especially to find out to what extent Confucianism may be an obstacle to the democratization of the countries of the region.

THREE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

We may consider three fundamental currents of analysis that can be used to attempt to explain the nature of mutual relations between traditional Asian values based on the foundation of Confucianism and the processes of political modernization and democratization. These are: the modernization perspective, the concept of cultural relativism and the views relating to communitarianism.

The supporters of the first model assume that the differences in the applied political solutions in countries in the East and the West will gradually diminish as a result of global modernizing processes. Although the concept of a 'plurality of modernities' has been partially acknowledged on theoretical grounds by supporters of modernization, the ongoing discourse concerning political transformation continues to be dominated by the supporters of a homogenous model of political modernity, which is identified with the Western model of democracy. One of the most famous scholars that subscribes to this vision is Francis Fukuyama, who is of the opinion that any changes regarding political institutions (upper structures) inevitably lead to the destruction of the traditional Confucian social order (in the lower structures). According to the modernists, Confucian culture can easily be a foundation for authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes, like in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, or Singapore; it can also exist alongside or even support the democratic systems of Japan, Taiwan or South Korea. Although Confucianism rejects liberal in-

⁷ L.H.M. Ling, Chih-yu Shih, 'Confucianism with a Liberal Face: The Meaning of Democratic Politics in Postcolonial Taiwan', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (1998), pp. 55-82.

⁸ D.K. Emmerson, 'Singapore and the "Asian Values" Debate', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1995), pp. 95-105; Yi-Huah Jiang, 'Asian Values and Communitarian Democracy' in *International Workshop on Deliberating the "Asian Value" Debate: National Values, Chinese Values and Muslim Values in Southeast Asia*, Taipei 1998, p. 18.

dividualism, it puts education and tolerance very high in the hierarchy of social values, and they are compatible with the essence of the democratic system.⁹ Thus we should look somewhere else for the answer to the question, why some countries of East Asia have adopted democratic systems, while some have remained faithful to authoritarian ideas. According to Fukuyama this extremely important factor is the essential basis of the modernization of individual societies.¹⁰ One of the most outstanding scholars of the political systems in Asia, Robert A. Scalapino, has presented almost identical views on the influence of the modernization processes on the form of the political systems of East Asia.¹¹ He maintains that region's economic growth results in the opening of stratificational systems and a high level of mobilization; and both these processes exert a positive influence on the development of democracy.

Looking at the process of modernization from a slightly different angle, Marc F. Plattner points out that democratic regimes are, in a way, a continuation of liberalism. It means, in his view, that although liberal conceptions in East Asia at the beginning of 'the third wave' seemed to be almost absent, they became stronger as the area experienced prolonged economic growth, which generated, in its turn, modernizational political transformation.¹² Although, as Gerald L. Curtis indicates, traditional East Asian society is not yet a civil society, a particular effect of this synergy should be expected. The economic growth will cause the appearance of democratic institutions, and these will stimulate 'civic virtues' in the inhabitants of the region. The development of 'civic awareness,' in its turn, will help to stabilize the democratic systems.¹³

Scholars who are supporters of the second of the perspectives mentioned above, namely so-called, cultural relativism, maintain, in contrast to the followers of modernization, that East Asia is characterized by the stability of authoritarian political systems, which are derived from a historically and culturally rooted hierarchical social order. However, they are not going to disappear together with the modernization of economic systems, or the changes in the social structure caused by this modernization process. On the contrary, strong dynamics within the stratificational systems will cause a sense of threat in individuals. Looking for safety, the societies will develop an even more intense need for a strong central government.¹⁴

⁹ F. Fukuyama, 'Confucianism and Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1995), pp. 25-26.

¹⁰ Idem, 'The Illusion of Asian Exceptionalism' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Democracy in East Asia*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1998, pp. 224-225.

¹¹ R.A. Scalapino, 'A Tale of Three Systems' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Democracy in...*, p. 230.

¹² M.F. Plattner, 'From Liberalism to Liberal Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1999), pp. 130-133.

¹³ G.L. Curtis, 'A Recipe for Democratic Development' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Democracy in...*, p. 222.

¹⁴ L.W. Pye, 'Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society in Asia' in R.I. Rotberg (ed.), *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK)-New York 2001, p. 381.

Huntington, who shared this view, was of the opinion that East Asian countries always needed a tradition, which would help to consolidate state power; he therefore concluded that liberalism's concept of individual rights would not be accepted in the region.

More importantly, Confucian thought simply identified society with the state, and thus it did not leave any space for societal groups that were autonomous from the state. The relativists are certain that these characteristics of traditional Asian culture are major obstacles to the potential development of democracy in the region.¹⁵

Moderate supporters of cultural relativism are especially pessimistic when they evaluate the possibility of Asian democracies coming closer to their European precursors. Fareed Zakaria claims that even if the countries of East Asia manage to pass the threshold of institutional democratization, this will not necessarily lead to constitutional liberalism.¹⁶ This may signify that instead of an anticipated 'third wave,' one might witness the appearance, under the aegis of democracy, of illiberal and fundamentally authoritarian political solutions.

Daniel A. Bell, one of the leading scholars dealing with systems of values in the Confucian environment, distinguishes three characteristic traits that lead to the development of illiberal systems of political culture. These are: the lack of a neutral state, techno-paternalism and a centrally controlled public space, together with a dependent civil society. Whereas traditional Western liberalism recognizes the right of citizens to choose the form of their government, in a country that lacks this kind of neutrality, it is the rulers who decide about the most convenient model to be exercised in politics. In this way they can attempt to interfere in every aspect of their citizens' lives, for reasons known only to them. Under the rule of techno-paternalism, an illiberal state creates an extensive bureaucratic apparatus, based upon rational principles. In this way, the rulers create an administrative system which in its essence bears a close resemblance to business administration. If the main ruling principles are legal articles which are rigorously enforced there is not much room left for decision-making by the general populace. When public space is controlled, the existence of civil society, if at all possible, is under strict control by the administrative apparatus, and any form of public activity undertaken by citizens is strictly rationed.¹⁷

Both the above mentioned perspectives on the issue of the democratization of East Asia, namely the modernization conception and the relativist one, assess the dynamics of the change in the political systems of the region from the vantage point of the values connected with the tradition of liberal democracy. The third conception, known as the communitarian perspective, endeavours, at least formally, to eliminate the liberal analytical framework. It is also looking for the signs of democratization in

¹⁵ S.P. Huntington, 'After Twenty Years: The Future of Third Wave', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1997), p. 10.

¹⁶ F. Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 6 (1997), p. 28.

¹⁷ D.A. Bell [et al.], *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1995, pp. 163-167.

the region of East Asia, but it tries to determine its parameters in a way that is different and disconnected from the liberal tradition. The communitarian perspective tries to define the role of the state differently from the way liberals do. According to the latter, the existence of the state is based on the social contract of independent individuals, hence the aim of the institutions of the state is, by definition, to promote and defend fundamental, individual, political rights. In the communitarian version, the state has to represent, first of all, the interests of society as a whole. Its institutions are placed only in the context of communal values. So this perspective assumes that the fulfilment of collective aims is more important than the interests of individuals. The state thus embodies social aims and has the right to expect that each citizen sacrifices his or her needs to achieve common ends. The supporters of the communitarian tradition often make a conceptual distinction between politics understood in a wider sense, and narrower perspective of party politics. 'Distribution of power,' in the liberal sense between the institutional actors on the political scene, should be replaced, according to them, by the development of participation by all members of the community.¹⁸ The followers of this current view acknowledge that although Confucianism is not necessarily the foundation for the legitimization of authoritarian regimes, it is difficult to envision that on its ground the Western conception of human rights or the principles of liberal democracy will develop. Essentially, according to communitarians, we encounter in Confucian thought a range of ideas such as: the 'social foundation of power' or 'power exercised for the sake of society' that are close to some of the principles of procedural democracy in the societies of the West. Communitarians suggest then, that Confucian culture and a wider system of Asian values provide the framework which assists in the reinterpretation of the essential definition of liberal democracy and make it accessible to the societies of East Asia.¹⁹

Some ideological conceptions known as the programme of "Asian values" are also included in the communitarian view on the problematic of the democratization of Asia. One would look in vain for some homogenous canon of what this programme represents. The fundamental assumptions of the programme have focused on the necessity of the rebirth of a traditional system of values and a return to the Asian 'roots' of social identity. They were accompanied by the conviction not only about the 'otherness' but also the 'superiority' of Asian social systems over 'American' individualism, as these systems are based on communal values where the well-being of the community is more important than the well-being of an individual. The concep-

¹⁸ H. Tam, *Communitarianism: A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship*, New York University Press, New York 1998, pp. 12-18.

¹⁹ J.R. Bauer, D.A. Bell (eds.), *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK)-New York 1999; T. de Bary, 'Confucianism and Human Rights in China' in L. Diamond, M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Democracy in...*, pp. 42-56; T. de Bary, W. Tu (eds.), *Confucianism and Human Rights*, Columbia University Press, New York 1998; R.A. Fox, 'Confucian and Communitarian Responses to Liberal Democracy', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (1997), pp. 561-592; D.L. Hall, R.T. Ames, *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China*, Open Court, Chicago 1999.

tions of 'Asian values', which is represented by the formula of the political discourse in which they are presented, can be found in numerous articles, speeches, interviews and books. Some prominent Asian politicians became involved in this discourse, and that is why they are considered to be the 'founding fathers' of the new ideological current. *The conceptions of Asian values* were proclaimed as the new ideology of Asia, and were rejuvenated by the prime minister of Singapore, and were then picked up with extraordinary success by the ruler of Malaysia, Mahathir bin Mohamad.

The Bangkok Declaration, which was signed by the leaders of several Asian countries in 1996, was an attempt to codify the essence of the ideology of 'Asian values.' The declaration focused on several interconnected problems, which are worth mentioning. Firstly, a simple *cultural* argument was put forward which said that human rights were derived from a particular historical, social, economic and political context; therefore, in short, they have a specific character which depends upon the civilization in which they develop and are not universal in the particular conditions of contemporary Asian societies. Secondly, the Declaration contains statements that refer to the communitarian character of Asian societies. It says that responsibilities towards the family and the community constitute the nucleus of social life; this contrasts with Western individualism and its atomistic understanding of society. If the well-being of the community is more important than the well-being of the individual then emphasizing individual rights becomes a significant danger for the order and harmonious functioning of the society. Further on in the text of the Declaration, an argument appears that states that in Asia there is a tradition according to which citizens voluntarily observe discipline in all dimensions of social life, including family relations, relationships in a factory and also in politics. According to the authors of the Declaration, the self-discipline of Asian societies can be derived from a culturally determined need to be successful in the economic sphere. The conclusion which is derived from these assumptions states that social and economic rights are more important than citizens' and political rights, and in particular stress is put on 'the right to development.' Finally, an *organic* argument is made, which points out that the state and the society constitute one indivisible organism, and that the government holds power for the common good. The logical conclusion of such a position is that all criticism of the government is contrary to the interests of the whole society.²⁰ The politicized nature of the debate about Asian values was not founded on the sheer otherness of basic cultural elements. Asian values in their ideological incarnation were often treated in an instrumental way, and they were greeted with sharp criticism even among communitarians.²¹

If the above mentioned theoretical perspectives were to undergo empirical analysis, one could propose the following options. If the modernization perspective were to be true, all values contained within a traditional social culture should gradually

²⁰ See for example: Mahathir bin Mohamad in *Asiaweek*, 8 September 1995, p. 42.

²¹ K. Gawlikowski, 'Poglądy Mahathira bin Mohamada', *Res Publica Nowa*, No. 3 (2003); idem, 'Problem "wartości azjatyckich". Uwagi o koncepcjach Mahathira bin Mohamada', *Azja – Pacyfik* (Toruń), Vol. 2 (1999); Mahathir bin Mohamad, 'Rozważania o wartościach azjatyckich', *Azja – Pacyfik* (Toruń), Vol. 2 (1999).

disappear, and liberal democracy and its institutional framework should gradually become stronger. In the case of the second hypothesis being true, there would be no fundamental changes in the political systems of the countries of the region; instead, they would be characterized by the continuance of the steady framework of the Confucian tradition. Finally, if the communitarian model were to be the most representative, traditional systems of values would be followed by substantial changes in the democratization of political structures. This suggests that it would certainly be worthwhile to look at the problem more closely.

CONFUCIANISM AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH

Scholars have become increasingly interested in the discourse concerning the relationship between traditional Confucian values and democratization processes in the countries of East Asia. Some of the scholars did only theoretical research, but a number of them organized complex field-work, which could serve to verify the interrelationship between the models and the real attitudes of respondents. One of the first scholars, who took up the question of Asian values in the context of their influence on the organization of the system of social relations and the organization of political life, was the American scholar David I. Hitchcock from the Washington Center of Strategic and International Studies.²²

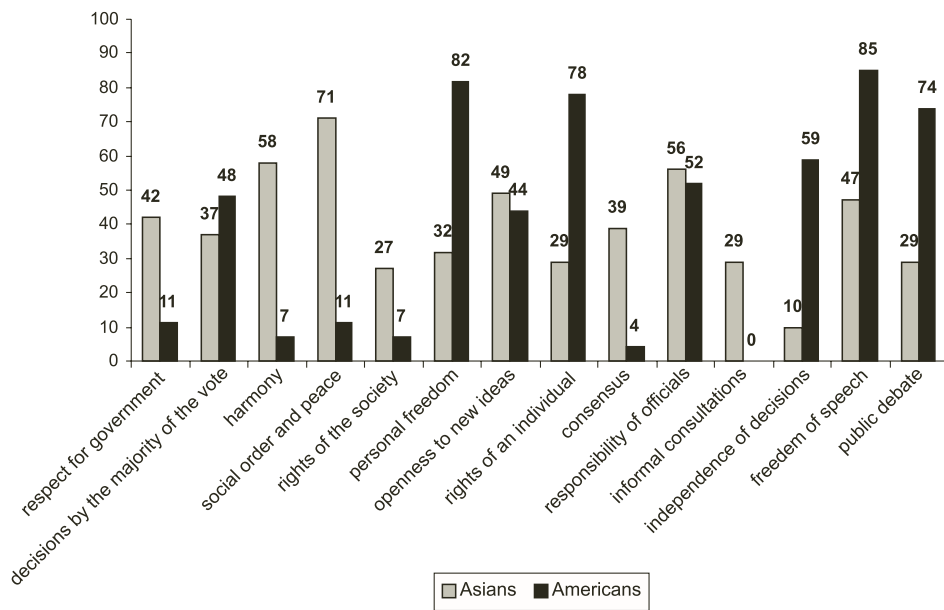
In his research concerning Asian values, he asked one hundred respondents from the United States and seven countries of East Asia (China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) to choose from two lists presented to them of those personal or social values or characteristics that were, in their view, *especially important for people in their country*. Two out of the five most often mentioned personal values or characteristics, as well as two out of the six 'most popular' social values were included on a *list of priorities* for both Asians and Americans. The biggest differences in the number of the answers made by American and Asian respondents were related to the relative importance ascribed by them to the items: 'social order and harmony,' 'personal freedom' and 'individual rights.' The first of the above mentioned answers was characterized as 'especially important' by 11% of Americans and 71% of Asians, and the next two by 82% of Americans and 32% of Asians, and 78% of Americans and 29% of Asians respectively.

In the next part of his research, Hitchcock again asked one hundred respondents from the countries of East Asia and eighteen Americans to read carefully a list of twelve different practices related to government. The respondents were to underline those positions which, according to them, people in their countries consider to be 'the most important,' and they were also to mark those that they considered to be 'less important.' Hitchcock stresses that, when making the list of practices, he avoid-

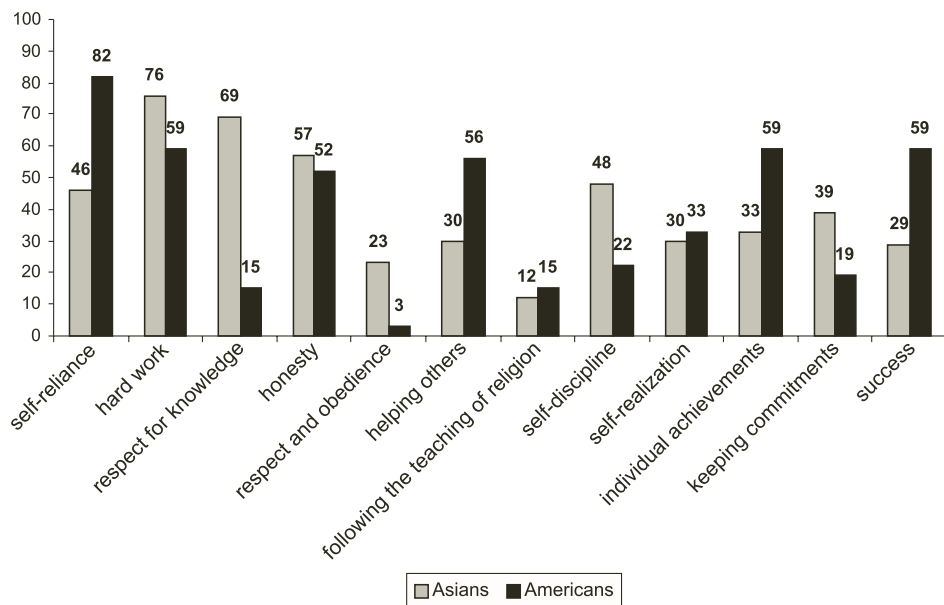
²² D.I. Hitchcock, *Asian Values and the United States: How Much Conflict?*, CSIS, Washington 1994. An extensive translation of the fragments from Hitchcock's work was published in: A.W. Jelonek (ed.), *Wietnamczycy. Systemy wartości, stereotypy Zachodu*, Warszawa 2004.

ed such expressions as 'the right to' or 'freedom to', and tried to choose words in such a way as to obtain the highest possible level of objectivity.

Social values in the research of Hitchcock: Asians and Americans



Personal values in the research of Hitchcock: Asians and Americans



Three out of twelve items, namely: 'freedom of speech,' 'choosing leaders in free elections,' and also 'lack of discrimination because of race, religion, colour of the skin, sex, age or physical handicap,' were singled out as 'the most important' by 100% of Americans. In the case of Asian respondents, the most frequent choices were 'free elections,' 'honest pay' (as relating to the local conditions), 'humane conditions and hours of work,' and later on, 'lack of discrimination.' In comparison with Americans, Asians paid much more attention to order and peace in society, respect for the government, harmony based upon the 'status quo' and respect for knowledge. At the same time, both Americans and Asians valued highly hard work, honesty, self-realization, responsible public officials, and openness to new ideas.

It is interesting that over 50% of Asian respondents described as 'the most important' as many as nine activities, and six of them were evaluated in this way by over 60% of the respondents from that region. Three items received the lowest scores in East Asia: 'public assembly and organizing groups for different reasons,' 'the right to a quick trial' and 'the right to refuse testimony against somebody.'

The practices listed by Hitchcock can be divided into three categories: political, legal and economic. The respondents from four Asian countries expressed the biggest interest in economic practices. 'Free elections' were considered to be 'most important' by over 70% of the respondents from the whole region. China was an exception where only 39% of the respondents described them as 'most important' or 'less important,' and 22% did not give any answer. 'Freedom of speech' was singled out as the 'most important' by 67% of the respondents from Asia, excluding Singapore. 'Not to be imprisoned without an indictment' and 'the right to retain an attorney during the legal process' were evaluated as being the 'most important' by 50% of the subjects from all Asian countries, again except for Singapore, where extended arrest without indictment is legal.

Summarizing the results of his research Professor Hitchcock, to some extent, agreed with the proponents of the 'relativistic' view on the interdependence between democratization processes and the traditional set of 'Asian values.' In his view, the results of his research confirmed a fundamental difference in the hierarchy of values between Asian and American respondents. Apart from evident dissimilarities in the sphere concerning 'practices related to governing,' there is a fundamental difference in the picture emerging from Hitchcock's survey in, what he calls, 'the world of hidden convictions' in the sphere of personal and social values, and the meaning of some human rights. Hitchcock's research was widely read in the circles of scholars dealing with the problematic of 'Asian values' and its results were repeatedly used to point out the fundamental difference of social and political systems between the civilizations of the West and East Asia, and probably of different directions of their evolution.

Hitchcock's research met and is still meeting some serious methodological reservations; this suggested that the collected results were interpreted in an excessively universal character. The sample analyzed by Hitchcock was extremely small and it was used to formulate far-reaching judgments. Hitchcock, an American, carried out

his research by himself, which undoubtedly would have influenced the content of the answers given to him. Moreover, the survey was carried out among so-called 'opinion leaders' – politicians and representatives of science and business circles. The 'opinion leaders' in the countries of East Asia, with some small exceptions, were at the time when the research was conducted at the very centre of a great ideological discussion between civilizations, in which the universalism of Western values was contrasted with the relativism in understanding of the world proposed by the East. These circles naturally presented a picture of the system of values that they wanted to see in their own societies. This 'programmatic' subjectivism of the research group certainly was not conducive to showing the real state of affairs and the degree to which traditional Asian values were rooted in the contemporary societies of the region.

Using a similar set of research tools, a team of students from the Department of Sociology at Warsaw University, together with the Department of Social Sciences of the National University at Hanoi, undertook in 2003 under my direction a study of the system of values of Hanoi students. In our research we eschewed excessive generalizations about different civilizations that were apparent in Hitchcock's research methodology, and instead established a much simpler framework for the project. We maintained full anonymity in our research. More importantly, the survey in Vietnam was conducted by local collaborators and the respondents learned from the information in the survey that the exclusive organizer of the research was the Department of Social Sciences of the National University at Hanoi, which made it easier for us to limit potential distortions in the answers.²³

The analysis of the results of our research shows significant similarities but also significant differences in the understanding of hierarchies of values, when compared to the published results of David Hitchcock's survey. These discrepancies sometimes exceed 30%, and they have a strong effect on the configuration of the sets of values most often declared to be significant. Among the personal values in Hitchcock's research, the greatest number of points were awarded respectively to 'hard work,' 'respect for knowledge,' 'individual achievements,' 'honesty,' and 'self-discipline.' In the research we conducted, together with 'hard work' and 'respect for knowledge', the set of the most often declared values consisted of 'independence,' 'being successful in life,' 'helping others' and 'honesty.'

Essentially, the traditional example of an individual is undermined by a radical drop in seeing the importance of 'self-discipline' as a significant value.²⁴ On the other hand, according to the young Vietnamese, the values pointing to the exceptional role of the community such as 'helping others' and, something which is considered to be fundamental in Confucian tradition, respect for one's parents, were seen to be even more important here than in the view of Asian elites from Hitchcock's research. So, are we witnessing a significant change in the self-definition of individuals and in

²³ A detailed report of the research in: A.W. Jelonek (ed.), *Wietnamczycy...*

²⁴ K. Tomala, 'Prawa człowieka w Chińskiej Republice Ludowej' in K. Tomala (ed.), *Chiny. Przemiany państwa i społeczeństwa w okresie reform 1978-2000*, Warszawa 2001, p. 149.

their outlook on the social reality? One may conclude that the results of the research confirm this thesis; this is also corroborated by the high position ascribed to the variable, 'being a success in life.' This value was singled out by the respondents almost as often as 'hard work,' 'respect for knowledge,' or 'independence' (the elites of East Asia researched by Hitchcock chose 'success' significantly less often than 'hard work', respectively 26% and 76%). What is the meaning of this change?

Fundamental personal values, attesting to the vitality of tradition, including the Confucian tradition, in contemporary Vietnamese society, still seem to be well-preserved. A large proportion of our respondents still singled out the importance of such characteristics as 'hard work,' 'respect for knowledge,' 'independence,' 'honesty,' 'obedience and respect expressed for one's parents.' And even though in comparison with the results gathered by Hitchcock, such values as 'hard work,' 'respect for knowledge,' and 'honesty' received a lower percentage of points, one should not think that this cluster of values lost a great deal of its importance. Furthermore, if we assume that the age and status of the people studied by Hitchcock made them rather conservative in their evaluation of the social importance of traditional values, so the young age of the Vietnamese subjects would in all likelihood make them more radical in their opinions.

From the perspective of the outlook on the existing relations between the traditional system of Confucian values and modernization processes, the results of the Vietnamese research, when compared to the analysis done by Hitchcock, can lead to somewhat different conclusions. We encounter here a process, within which traditional values are supplemented by new values. There arises in this way a cohesive and logical framework, in which 'traditional values' are not only not driven away by new values typical of the West, but they gain permanence by linking themselves with the aims offered by the new reality. The duties, which are determined by tradition, are linked in this model with rights; in this case it is the right to be a success. In the view of young Vietnamese, success is not inevitably linked with the appreciation of the role of individual achievements. The individualization of aims, which can be seen in the pursuit of one's own success and is also present in the awareness of one's own rights, does not have to lead to the individualization of activities, although theoreticians of individualism often link together an individual perspective of aims with an individual mode of activity (decision-making, self-reliance).²⁵ In the Vietnamese conditions, group activity is still thought to be a better way to realize one's own aims, and it is treated not as a value in itself but as a comfortable and effective mode of action.

When compared to the results of Hitchcock's research, there is also a considerable shift in the sphere of social values that are most often declared as being significant. The most highly regarded values in Hitchcock's research, like 'harmony,' and 'order in society', are replaced in the results gathered at Hanoi by 'community rights' and 'personal freedom,' whereas the variable 'respect for public officials' scored third in both surveys. Similarly a high position in both surveys is occupied by the variables, 'respect

²⁵ See P.L. Berger, *Rewolucja kapitalistyczna. Pięćdziesiąt tez o dobrobycie, równości i wolności*, trans. by Z. Simbierowicz, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 1995, pp. 167-168.

for government' and 'openness to new ideas.' A significant 20% difference in scores, as far as personal freedom is concerned, shows that in the opinion of the Vietnamese students it is not considered to belong to the set of values regarded as most significant. 'Solving problems by using public debate' has a score of 48%, which puts this social value in fifth place.

An indication of the growing importance of legal ethics is the 65% score of 'personal freedom' (in comparison to 31% in Hitchcock's research; in the results of the Vietnamese survey it is the value that was most often pointed out). Equally important seems to be the students' omission of the values highly evaluated by the respondents in Hitchcock's research. They are: 'harmony' (28% as against 58% in Hitchcock's survey), 'order in society' (28% as against 71%) and 'consensus' (12.3% as against 39%). Particular respect for these values constituted, according to the American scholar, maybe the most fundamental trait of the 'Asian' perspective when it came to looking at the public sphere, and it was also the key to understanding the role of the individual in East Asian society. Some new research hypotheses seem to appear in the light of the Vietnamese survey. The simple version of the 'relativism' of political systems that emerges from Hitchcock's research seems not to be confirmed here. The global changes and their reception by Vietnamese youth appear to prove an ongoing process of hybridization, which means that traditional Confucian values are supplemented by some chosen values borrowed from the world of the 'liberal' West. If we limit ourselves solely to the level of axiology in the analytical sphere, the results of the Vietnamese research would force us to accept that either the communitarian or the modernization model is more applicable when examining East Asian societies. We should not forget, however, that both theoretical variants, apart from accepting a hybrid nature of the evolution of the system of values, also assumed a significant transformation of the constitutional framework in the direction of a universal or at least an 'Asian model of democracy.' The lack, at least for now, of any, even the most basic, principles of democracy in the political system of Vietnam, has led us to try to verify our hypotheses in our next research project.

LIBERAL AND CONFUCIAN VALUES IN POLAND AND IN TAIWAN

I have decided to verify the hypothesis about the communitarian or the modernization direction of the transformation of democratic systems, by analyzing the durability of the traditional, Confucian system of values with reference to the example of a country with consolidated democratic procedures and which is generally considered to be one of the leaders of the Huntingtonian 'third wave' in Asia; this country is Taiwan. The research that was carried out there was placed in the context of the measurement of the system of values in Polish society, which represents a Western cultural milieu, but in which democratic procedures appeared at more or less the same time as its Asian counterpart. Taiwan, which is one of the famous Asian tigers, has in recent years experienced, apart from its spectacular economic success, some fundamental changes in political life. It began in 1996, when it rapidly reformed the main institutions of

public life, which was tantamount to the transformation of its political model from being an authoritarian state through various intermediary stages (so-called limited democracy) towards a full democratic system based in its entirety on examples taken from the West. Such a revolutionary change in the political character of a country is considered by political scientists to be an event without precedent in history.²⁶

In 1949 the activists of the Nationalistic Party (*Kuomintang* – KMT) made an attempt, after being defeated by the Communist forces and after escaping from the Chinese mainland, to set up their strategic bridgehead on Taiwan. Very few observers believed that anybody would be able to create on the island an efficient functioning economy, civil administrative structures, and they believed even less that anybody could build the foundations of a democratic system. As it happened, these sentiments proved to be largely unwarranted. For the scholars of democratization processes, what was surprising was the method used to effect fundamental changes in the political system of the country. On Taiwan democratization processes were achieved through the gradual relinquishing of power by the ruling Nationalistic Party (KMT); the whole process was completely different from the ways in which democratic systems in Latin America and Eastern Europe were built. It was the Nationalistic Party that initiated basic political reforms. A gradual opening up of the political scene did not lead, as was the case with the majority of the countries in the Huntingtonian ‘third wave,’ to the breakdown of the system of state power, and it did not cause a deep economic crisis. Being aware of the gradually growing opposition, the government connected with the KMT voluntarily began the process of political liberalization and the gradual sharing of power. Eventually its efforts were rewarded with the complete democratization of the country. It was the KMT that negotiated, reached compromises and achieved agreements with the opposition parties, making the progress of democratization irreversible. A fundamentally authoritarian party became a key force in the democratization of the country. Thanks to it, in the middle of the 1980s, a ban on the activities of political parties was lifted, and fundamental freedoms and civil rights were introduced. At the end of 1991, the first free elections to the National Assembly took place, and in December 1992 to the Parliament (legislative *yuan*). In December 1994 the first elections for the positions of the governors of the provinces were held, and in March 1996 the first elections for the office of the president of the country took place. The example of Taiwan seemed to be significant, that it could be used to verify to what degree the system of values that was cherished by society resembled the liberal model, and how close it was to the traditional Confucian model; ‘democratic rules of the game’ were supposed to be valid all the time. Although, sometimes reservations are held as to the character of Taiwanese democracy and its apparently ‘Asian’ features, it needs to be categorically stated that all constitutional and procedural solutions used in Taiwan fulfil all the criteria mentioned in Dahl’s normative model of polyarchy

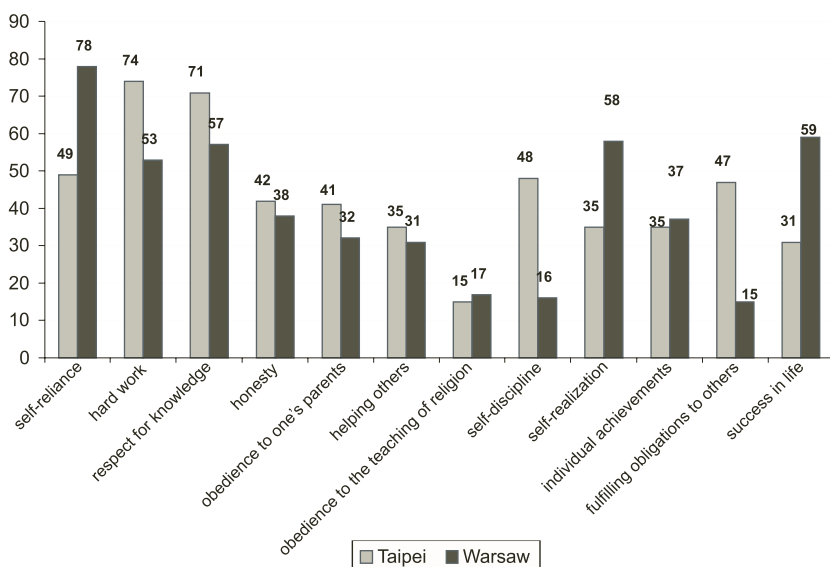
²⁶ L. Chao, R.H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1998; C. Clark, *Taiwan’s Development: Implications for Contending Political Economy Paradigms (Contributions in Economics and Economic History)*, Columbia University Press, New York 1998.

– the model that is almost universally considered to be the institutional standard of contemporary democracies.²⁷

The applied research procedure was not fundamentally different from the one used in 2003. It was based again on the model of the survey used in the work of Hitchcock, which was based on the opposition of traditional Confucian values to the idealized liberal values of the West. The Taiwanese survey was conducted from October to December, 2007 on a sample of 418 students (215 women and 203 men) and it was based at the three biggest academic centres in the city (two state schools: the National Taiwan University and the National Chengchi University; and one private: Tankang University). The second part of the research was a survey which was carried out on a sample of students from Warsaw's universities. 463 students (240 women and 223 men) were surveyed from March to May. The research was carried out at the biggest public universities of the capital, including the University of Warsaw, the Warsaw Technical University, the Warsaw School of Economics and the private B. Janski University.

Although the research that was carried out records only the factual state of affairs at one point in time, not allowing us to make any general statements about the course of the processes of social change and the modernization of political values, one could expect that over the course of two decades of the functioning of democracy there should occur significant interactions between the sphere of axiology and political *praxis*.

Personal values in the survey of Taiwanese and Polish students



²⁷ R.A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1971. See also A.W. Jelonek, 'Dynamika kryzysu tajwańskiej demokracji' in M. Broda, M.D. Dziekan (eds.), *Oblicza Wschodu. Religia, ideologia, polityka, gospodarka*, Wydział Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politologicznych UŁ, Elipsa, Warszawa 2004.

The results of the research lead to some very interesting conclusions. In the case of personal values, one encounters in almost all the answers of the Taiwanese respondents that they singled out values from the cluster 'traditional Confucian values' as often or more often than in the research carried out by Hitchcock and the survey of the students from Hanoi. 'Hard work' was singled out by 74.3% of the subjects, which is a little bit less than in Hitchcock's research, but substantially more than in the Vietnamese survey. The singling out of typically Confucian values such as: 'respect for knowledge' 71%, 'obedience to one's parents' 41.1%, 'self-discipline' 33.2%, 'fulfilling obligations to others' 47.2%, was higher or significantly higher in comparison with the Vietnamese survey or the research carried out by the American scholar. The values considered to be important from 'the liberal West' cluster oscillated in the answers given by the Taiwanese respondents around the ones given in the former research in the region of East Asia. 'Self discipline' was indicated by 49.2%, 'self-realization' by 36.3%, 'individual achievements' by 34.8%, 'success in life' 31.7%.

It is worth noting that for the sample of the Polish students the system of values is paradoxically in many places much more like the idealized model of 'traditional Confucian values' than the model of 'the liberal West.' In some cases like 'self-reliance' 77.3%, 'keeping one's obligations' 14.6%, or 'individual success in life' 59.4%, the Polish students are successfully 'catching up' with the American respondents. However, in the case of such values as 'respect for knowledge' 56.4%, 'hard work' 52.8%, or 'obedience to one's parents' 32% the Polish respondents seem, at least in their answers, to be very 'Confucian.' Coming back, however, to the analysis of the influence of democratization on a hypothetical transformation of the system, it seems that, at least in the observed time horizon, it remained almost constant. In addition, it should be pointed out that the respondents in both surveys are students, which means that they were born, or at least reared, in the sphere of the new democratic political reality.

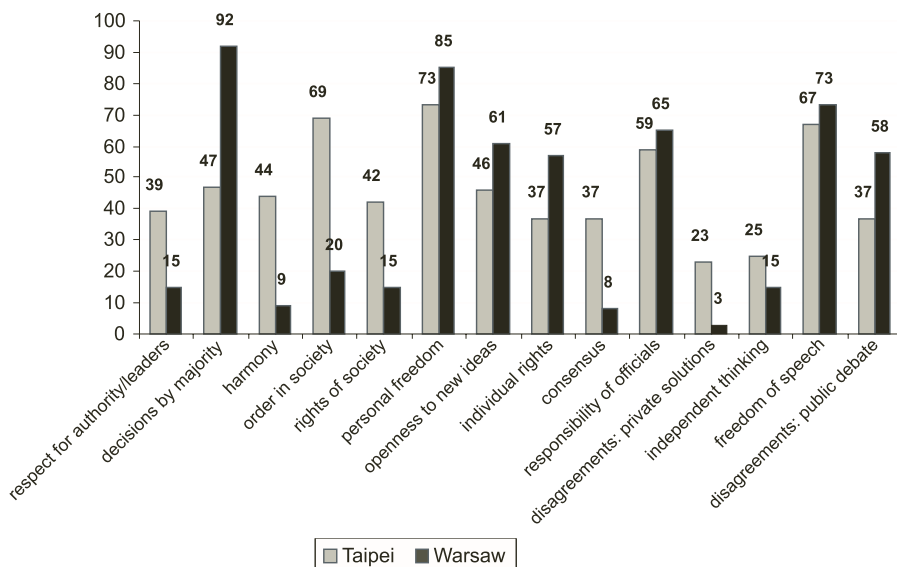
The results of the second part of the survey analyzing social values seem to be even more interesting from the point of view of our examination of the relationship between Asian values and liberal democracy. We already see that the system of values of the Taiwanese youth is not fundamentally different in the majority of its dimensions from the system of values represented by the respondents from the Hitchcock's research or the survey 'Vietnam 2003.' Relatively high scores for the values from the Confucian cluster were still in place such as, 'respect for authority' 39.1%, 'harmony' 44%, 'consensus' 37.2%, and the 'rights of society' 42.2%, and also relatively low scores for, 'solving disagreements by public debate' 31.6%, and 'independent thinking' 25.4%, from the cluster of liberal values.

At the same time, one can observe much higher scores for some variables from the cluster of 'liberal values' such as 'taking a decision by majority' 46.7%, 'individual freedom' 73.3% and 'freedom of speech' 67.4%.

When compared with the values cherished by Polish youth, the Taiwanese students differ to a large extent when it comes to the cluster 'traditional Confucian values.' The biggest differences could be observed in assessing the degree of importance

of such variables as 'order in society' (49 percentage points), 'harmony' (35), 'social rights' and 'consensus' (29 points each). Probably, some of the notions proposed in the survey might appear to be incomprehensible to Polish respondents. Because of their absence in the public discourse, they could additionally subjectively 'lose' their importance. In some other instances they could encounter different individual interpretation, coming from another cultural context (like 'solving problems by private agreements'). What also needs to be pointed out when we consider the foundation for our analysis on the interdependence between traditional Confucian values and procedural democracy is that the majority of the values offered to the respondents in the 'liberal' cluster are considered in both societies to be extremely important. The differences, however, seem to be fairly unimportant (except for the variable 'decisions taken by the majority') when one takes into account completely different cultures and political traditions. Their occurrence might be the result of a deeply rooted Confucian tradition but one could also find for it some other alternative explanations.

Public values in the survey of Taiwanese and Polish students



The results of the comparative research carried out in Taipei and Warsaw as well as the conclusions from the earlier survey of Hitchcock and project Vietnam 2003 are an interesting commentary on the problem of political transformation occurring in the countries of East Asia. They also offer an interesting perspective on mutual dependence between Confucianism and liberal democracy, or at least its constitutional procedures.

When taking into account the research material that has been gathered, it is difficult to believe what has been proposed by the cultural relativists' vision of the

political world which divides contemporary civilizations into the liberal West and Confucian East. It is also hard to believe in the existence of alleged inner-blocks that hinder the development of democracy in the traditional systems of Asian values that were suggested by relativists. Additionally, the research carried out on Taiwan shows that the arguments about the communitarian character of the political constructions in Asia are also highly doubtful. Obviously, it is hard to question the existence of communal values in Asian societies. As a matter of fact, they can be rather clearly seen in the answers of the Taiwanese respondents in the sphere of personal values and partly in the sphere of social values. However, one cannot draw the unequivocal conclusion, as has been suggested by the followers of communitarianism, that they shape political systems only in one direction. We encounter here also the opposite process. As was seen in the Taiwanese research, democratic procedures that were undoubtedly borrowed from the West shape in a very distinct way the variables in the systems of values that are essential for political systems. Additionally, communitarian 'Asian democracy' which is considered to be a 'third way' proposed also by the above mentioned followers of an Asian version of values is a notion that is so unclear and speculative that it can only be subjected to rational empirical analysis with the utmost difficulty.

The results that we received might indicate the accuracy of the modernization model. However, one needs to be careful when making statements that are so clear-cut. Proposed by modernists and relativists, and later picked up by Hitchcock, what is in essence a binary vision of a communal, hierarchical and social reality of the East opposed to the individualistic, liberal, Western society constitutes an insufficient context for accurate analysis of transformations occurring on the axiological plane. On the basis of the obtained data we can confirm the weakening of the influence of the traditional social model based on harmony and social agreement, but the data that we have received does not allow us to state unequivocally that the change was in this case a clear shift of declarations on the subjects into the sphere of a 'Western system of values.' The multiplicity and richness of the relations occurring between different aspects of culture and the organization of the society make it impossible to speak about them using the categories of patterns which take over and their adaptation to the native culture. However, in the world where globalization is a significant trend, there exist various mechanisms which can lead to the spreading of the ideas of procedural democracy; which has been emphasized on many occasions by the modernists. There are also many barriers to the spreading of the models of Western liberal democracy; a fact about which almost everybody is aware. Given the evidence of the presented research material, it is hard to believe, however, that the traditional systems of values are in the future going to be the most significant barrier.

Translated by Bogdan Zieliński

Dr. hab. Adam W. JELONEK, Professor of the Jagiellonian University, Director of the Department of Near and Far East Asia at the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the Jagiellonian University. Chief Editor of the yearly *Azja – Pacyfik, Kultura, Gospodarka, Społeczeństwo*. He is a graduate of the Department of Political Science, Journalism, and Management of the Warsaw University, and holds a doctorate and habilitation in the field of sociology. He specializes in theory and programmes of social development, theory of democracy and the political anthropology of East Asia and South-East Asia. He is the author of several scholarly articles and books: *Kibuc. Czy kryzys kolektywistycznego socjalizmu?* (Warszawa 1994), *Rewolucja Czerwonych Khmerów 1975-1979* (Warszawa 1998), *Koncepcje rozwoju społecznego* (Warszawa 2001), *W stronę nieliberalnej demokracji* (Warszawa 2002), *Dylematy konsocjonalizmu. Przypadek Maleszji* (Warszawa 2004), *Wietnamczycy. Systemy wartości, stereotypy Zachodu* (Warszawa 2004), *Jednostka i społeczeństwo w Azji* (ed.) (Toruń 2007), *Confucianism. China Towards the New Century* (ed.) (Kraków 2008) and *Historia Kambodży* (Warszawa 2008). In preparation: *Historia Maleszji* – together with z E. Trojnar (Warszawa 2009), *Bezdroża konsocjonalizmu. Azjatyckie demokracje w społeczeństwach pluralnych* (Kraków 2009).